

Document Based Exercise–Slavery and the Declaration of Independence

Today, I want to know what you know about historical thinking. Historians ask questions about the past and make conclusions about the evidence (documents) they have. For this activity, you will use the documents provided to answer the following question:

How was the argument over slavery an argument over the meaning of the Declaration of Independence?

Task 1: Activating Prior Knowledge. Think about what the ideals of the Declaration of Independence mean. Write them down and then turn to your partner and share your definitions. Add to your information if necessary.

Equality= All people are treated equal no matter the race, religion, ethnicity, or financial stance

Individual Rights= Everybody has the right to do as they wish as long as they do not interfere with the rights of others.

Common Good= Giving up your own rights for the better of the group

Life=

Liberty=

Pursuit of Happiness=

Popular Sovereignty=

Task 2: Looking at Historical Documents. Take a look at the packet of documents that you were given. Spend the next **10 minutes** reviewing your packet, thinking about what questions come up. Pick three documents that are the most interesting, (and maybe most confusing) and complete the graphic organizer below.

Documents I found interesting/ confusing:	My 2 questions about each document are:
Document A;	<p>1. Why did Abraham Lincoln think that the Fourth of July was only a great day to burn fire crackers and not to celebrate independence?</p> <p>2. Is Abraham Lincoln talking about growing physically fat, mentally fat, or does he mean something entirely different in this document?</p>
Document D;	<p>1. Is Frederick Douglas speaking for the right of African American sin a letter or by a newspaper article or some other kind of literary device?</p> <p>2. What IS the fourth of July to African American slaves?</p>

Document F;	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="683 186 1430 315">1. Why does he mention that he will import as many Germans as he has grown slaves?<li data-bbox="683 315 1430 741">2. Why doe she think that turning African Americans into serfs is a better idea than allowing them to be in the conditions and where they are during that period of time?
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Task 3: Understanding Historical Documents. Your next step is to look at your documents again and find out what they tell you about each historic characters' beliefs on slavery and how their interpretation of the Declaration of Independence was used to support their perspective. Remember, you will need to use these documents to answer the following question: **How was the argument over slavery an argument over the meaning of the Declaration of Independence?**

Complete the table below.

Documents I chose:	What I think this document says about the historic characters' perspective on slavery	What evidence (details) I used from each document
Document A;	This document says to me that Lincoln is against the acts of slavery.	He says that the Fourth of July is still a good day...for burning fire-crackers which is telling me that he thinks independence is a lie and only given to the white race.
Document D;	Douglas is definitely against slavery.	The whole document is ranting about how independence means nothing to blacks because it doesn't apply to them. He is enraged at slavery and does not hold back his feelings fro it.
Document F;	Against slavery, but not an abolitionist	Though not as aggressively mentioned as with Mr. Frederick Douglas, this man still clearly state that slavery is wrong and freedom is key and that is what America is about, but he is in no way an abolitionist. He says in one of his quotes that slavery is like holding a wolf by the ears. He is right, because whether we continue slavery or end it, things are going to get, violent, ugly, and either way, there will be heavy trouble and a lot of political controversy and turmoil, as well as among the people.

Let's review:

- In **task 1** you interpreted the ideals of the Declaration of Independence.
- In **task 2** you analyzed historical documents
- In **task 3** you analyzed three characters' beliefs on slavery and how their interpretations of the Declaration of Independence were used to support their perspectives.

Task 4:

You will now provide a response to:

How was the argument over slavery an argument over the meaning of the Declaration of Independence?

- Must contain thesis statement
- 3 statements that support your thesis using the primary documents. Cite documents by referring to them as Document A, Document B, etc.
- Use prior knowledge to fill in the gaps

The argument over slavery was heavily fueled by the statements presented in the Declaration of Independence. Document A for our DBE assignment is written by Abraham Lincoln and in that document, he is referring to American Independence and what it means to us now. In this document, he states that the Fourth of July is still a great day, but it is a great day for burning fire-crackers and in this, he mentions nothing about American Independence and that the Fourth of July was originally a holiday for our Independence. We do know the Declaration of Independence declares freedom to ALL despite, religion, beliefs, financial standings, and even a person's RACE or COLOR!

Frederick Douglas is another man completely against slavery and suggests that it goes against independence. Document D is the exact spot in which you can acquire the knowledge he has to present to us; the Fourth of July, to slaves,

is just another day of cruel injustice to the black race. He continues on to say that it is basically a scam and we are lying about freedom and what we truly stand for as American citizens. We don't deserve to wave our flag as a symbol of freedom, necessarily as we do a symbol that we are a country. Although he mentions nothing about foreign nations and their policies, we can safely assume that in direct comparison, he finds us no more free ensuring than Hitler and his Nazis, even though this is a far different time period of nearly 100 years prior.

Thomas Jefferson was by no means an abolitionist, but he certainly was by no means for slavery either. Though he was against slavery, he wasn't one to speak of it quite like Frederick Douglass. He did mention that slavery is, however, sort of like abandoning children. This means that it has left us to look like terrible monsters. Either way, whether we continue or abolish slavery, Jefferson says that there will be some major consequences. It is kind of like having a wolf by the ears, as he explains it, we can either let go and get attacked, or hold on and be in a major crisis that we ignorantly got into.

The Declaration of Independence was actually, if you think about it, more of a debatable document. Even though it stated Independence was guaranteed, we refused to offer that Independence to our slaves. We really made life harder and more argumentative than it should have ever been.